

13th July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: Lifting of COVID-19 restrictions and the impact on education settings

COVID-19 restrictions are soon to be lifted. You may be relieved by this news, or you may be worried about what it will mean for you and your loved ones.

The impact of COVID-19 restrictions on children and young people has been massive. We know it's been a difficult time for families, particularly in the last few weeks when we've seen a huge increase in the number of children and young people testing positive for COVID-19. This is largely because of the Delta variant, which spreads much more easily than previous variants. We've never seen so many COVID-19 cases in children locally, nor so many children isolating, with some being asked to isolate multiple times.

As we move towards the lifting of restrictions, please continue to be kind to staff at your child's school or early years setting. They've had a difficult year and have sometimes been on the receiving end of anger from parents for things that are not in their control. The last week of the school term is going to be particularly difficult for them, given all the changes in the national guidance, and they are all trying to do their best. Public Health have advised schools to keep current arrangements in place for the final week of term as that is the best way of ensuring they can continue to provide education in as safe a way as possible.

Over the page, we outline what the change in guidance will mean for families and for settings

Restrictions are ending but COVID-19 is not. The vaccine programme is a huge success and the risk of people with the virus getting seriously ill and needing hospital care has reduced significantly. Not everyone is fully vaccinated yet and most under 18s aren't eligible. Some vulnerable people have health problems that mean they can't have the vaccine, or it doesn't work as well for them.

None of us want to return to remote learning, and we all want to protect our loved ones and support people that provide services that we depend on. It's really important that we continue to play our part to keep cases of COVID-19 as low as we can. We can keep showing kindness and looking out for each other by continuing to follow the 5 big things. Although it's not the law after the 19th July, we can still respect each other and be kind to others as we move to the next step by:

- **Giving others space**
- **Wearing a face-covering in high risk places**
- **Getting a test and self-isolating if you have COVID-19 symptoms**
- **Meeting others outside where possible, and if not then letting the fresh air in**
- **Having both doses of the vaccine**

Finally, we would like to thank you for everything you've done to keep your family and community safe, and for your patience in supporting childcare settings, schools and colleges at this difficult time.

We're sure you're all looking forward to having a great summer break and a return to something approaching normality as we move forward. Take care, both of yourselves and others. Hopefully we'll be in a much stronger position come the start of the next school year.
Kind regards,

If you or your child have any concerns about COVID-19, contact the Healthy Futures Calderdale school nursing team by phone on **0303 330 9974** or by text on **07480 635297 (young people)** or **07507 332157 (parents/carers)**.

Kind regards,



Deborah Harkins
Director of Public Health



Julie Jenkins
Director of Children and
Young People's Services

What will change from 19th July?

- Schools will have the option of moving away from operating in 'bubbles' and early years settings will no longer need to keep groups apart. We have recommended schools continue with bubbles for the last week of term, as making changes at this point is likely to be disruptive to both schools and children. We expect that schools will look very different in September as they operate in a much more normal way, and children and young people can mix freely once again. Early years settings will make the changes at the time that is right for them, and some that close for the summer may choose to continue with their current arrangements until then.
- Schools and childcare settings will not need to send whole bubbles home if someone tests positive for COVID-19. Instead, NHS Test and Trace will contact the person who has tested positive (or their parent/carer) to find out who they've been in close contact with. It is only those people that will have to self-isolate. Again, we have advised that schools continue with existing arrangements for the last week of term.
- Where it looks like the virus has been passed on within a setting in an outbreak of COVID-19, the Public Health team will support the setting with any other actions that might be needed to reduce risk to others. From the start of the new school year in September, only in that instance might we see whole bubbles or larger groups of students asked to self-isolate. Please do support your child's setting if they ask your child to self-isolate. They are acting on the advice of Public Health and wouldn't be asking you to do something if it wasn't necessary to protect the health of others.
- Anyone who is advised to self-isolate before the 19th July will still need to complete their full self-isolation period, even if it ends after 19th July. Anyone who is asked to self-isolate between the 19th July and 16th August (in the context of schools, that includes the last week of term) will also be required by law to complete their 10 days of self-isolation.
- Face coverings will no longer be mandated, though we continue to strongly encourage their use in secondary schools, and at pick up/drop off in primary schools and early years settings, particularly in the run up to the school holidays. Face coverings are an important way of reducing the spread of COVID-19, and people are likely to be particularly anxious about catching COVID-19 in the run up to the Summer holidays.

What will change from 16th August?

- Anyone who has received both doses of the vaccine and all children and young people under 18 will no longer automatically need to self-isolate if they are a contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- There may be occasions where Public Health advice is given that requires some children to self-isolate. This will be kept to a minimum and should mean that your child is much less likely to be asked to stay at home. We do however need to ensure that where the risk of harm is high appropriate measures are put in place to reduce the risk to others.